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SERMON XVII.

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THE GUILT OF THE PAGAN.

"THEY are without excuse: because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God. And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind."—ROMANS 1: 20, 21, 28.

UNLESS the guilt of the pagan world can be proved, the missionary enterprises of the Christian Church, from the days of the Apostles to the present time, have all been a waste of labor. Nay more, if the sin and ill-desert of the entire human race, in all its generations, can not be established, then the Christian religion itself, involving the incarnation of God, is an attempt to supply a demand that has no real existence. Both theoretical and practical Christianity stands or falls with the doctrine of the universal guilt of man. It is no wonder, therefore, that the Apostle Paul, in the opening of the most systematic and logical treatise in the New Testament, the Epistle to the Romans, enters upon a line of argument to demonstrate the ill-desert of every human creature without exception, and to prove that before an

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unerring tribunal, and in the final day of adjudication, "every mouth must be stopped, and all the world become guilty before God." (Rom. 3 : 19.)

In conducting his argument, the Apostle relies upon two facts, in particular, to establish his position. The first is, that however dim or imperfect man's knowledge of God and the moral law may be, he nevertheless knows more than he puts in practice. Of the millions of idolaters in cultivated Greece and Rome, and the millions of idolaters in that barbaric world which lay outside of the Græco-Roman civilization, he affirms that they "are without excuse : because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God." And the second fact upon which he founds his charge of guilt is, that the dim perception of God and the moral law, as well as the idolatrous notions that were formed upon these subjects, both alike originated in the wicked inclination of the heart. These pagans, he says, "did not like to retain God in their knowledge," and, therefore, "God gave them over to a reprobate mind." The Apostle vindicates the ways of God in the condemnation of man, because human conscience, be it much or little, is always in advance of human character; and, also, because all the various forms of human error respecting the divine being and attributes, all the idolatry and superstition of the barbaric races of mankind, originate not in man's created and rational constitution, but in the sin of his apostate and corrupt heart. These two facts, in the judgment of St. Paul, justify the damnation of the heathen; and to their examination we now proceed, under the light of St. Paul's inspiration and reasoning.

I. The idea of God is the most important and comprehensive of all the ideas of which the human mind is possessed. It is the foundation of religion, of all right doctrine, and all right conduct. A correct intuition of it leads to correct religious theories and practice; while any erroneous or defective view of the Supreme Being will pervade the whole domain of religion, and exert a most pernicious influence upon the character and conduct of men. It is this great idea of the Deity, inborn and constitutional to the human mind, which St. Paul seizes; and he flashes its penetrating light into the recesses of the pagan heart. He traces back the horrible depravity of the heathen world, which he depicts with a pen as sharp as that of Juvenal, but with none of Juvenal's bitterness and vitriolic sarcasm, to a distorted and false conception of the divine being and attributes.

But he does not, for an instant, concede that this distorted and false conception is founded in the original structure and constitution of the human soul, and that this moral ignorance is necessary and inevitable to the pagan. This mutilated idea of the Supreme Being was not inlaid in the rational creature on that

morning of creation when God said: "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness." On the contrary, the Apostle affirms that in the moral constitution of a rational soul, and in the works of creation and providence, the Creator has given to all men the media to a correct idea of himself, and asserts, by implication, that if they had always employed these media, they would have always possessed this idea. "The wrath of God," he says, "is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who hold the truth in unrighteousness, because, that which may be known of God* is manifest in them, for God hath showed it unto them. For the invisible things of him, even his eternal power and godhead, are clearly seen from the creation of the world, being understood by the things that are made; so that they are without excuse: because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God." (Rom. 1: 18-21.) This is said, be it remembered, of the pagan world; and from this reasoning it appears that the pagan mind has not kept what was committed to it. It has not employed the moral instrumentalities, nor elicited the moral truths with which it has been furnished. This reasoning implies that the pagan man by his constitutional structure knows more of his Maker than he puts in practice; that he possesses a talent which he hides in the earth; that he has a pound which he keeps laid up in a napkin.

When Napoleon was returning from his campaign in Egypt and Syria, he was seated one night upon the deck of the vessel, under the open canopy of the heavens, surrounded by his captains and generals. The conversation had taken a skeptical direction, and most of the party had combated the doctrine of the divine existence. Napoleon sat silent and musing, apparently taking no interest in the discussion, when suddenly raising his hand, and pointing at the crystalline firmament, crowded with its mildly-shining planets and its keen glittering stars, he broke out in those startling tones that so often electrified a million of men: "Gentlemen, who made all that?" The "eternal power and godhead" of the Creator are impressed by "the things that are made;" and these words of Napoleon to his atheistic captains silenced them. And the same impression is made the world over. Go to-day into the heart of Africa, or into the center of New-Holland; select the most imbruted pagan that can be found; take him out under a clear star-lit heaven, and ask him who made all that, and the idea of a Superior Being—superior to all his fetishes and idols—possessing eternal power and godhead, immediately emerges in his consciousness. The instant the missionary takes this lustful idolater away from the circle of his idols, and brings him face to face with the heavens and the earth, as Napoleon brought his

* τὸ γνωστὸν, the knowable (scibile) in God; all that the finite can comprehend of the Infinite.

captains, the constitutional idea dawns again, and the pagan trembles before the unseen Power.*

But it will be objected that it is a very dim and inadequate idea of the Deity that thus rises in the pagan's mind, and that, therefore, the Apostle's affirmation that he is "without excuse" for being an idolater and a sensualist needs some qualification. This imbruted creature, says the objector, certainly does not possess the metaphysical conception of God as a Spirit, and of all his various attributes, like the dweller in Christendom. How then can he be brought in guilty before the same eternal bar, and be condemned to the same eternal death, with the nominal Christian?

* The early Fathers in their defense of the Christian doctrine of one God, against the objections of the pagan advocate of the popular mythologies, contend that the better pagan writers themselves agree with the new religion, in teaching that there is one Supreme Being. *Lactantius*, (*Institutiones* i. 5,) after quoting the Orphic poets, Hesiod, Virgil, and Ovid, in proof that the heathen poets taught the unity of the Supreme Deity, proceeds to show that the better pagan philosophers, also, agree with them in this. "Aristotle," he says, "although he disagrees with himself, and says many things that are self contradictory, yet testifies that one Supreme Mind rules over the world. Plato, who is regarded as the wisest philosopher of them all, plainly and openly defends the doctrine of a Divine Monarchy, and denominates the Supreme Being, not ether, nor reason, nor nature, but, as he is, *God*; and asserts that by him this perfect and admirable world was made. And Cicero follows Plato, frequently confessing the Deity, and calls him the Supreme Being in his treatise on the Laws." *Tertullian*, (*De test. an. c. 1*; *adv. Marc. i. 10*; *ad Scap. c. 2*; *Apol. c. 17*.) than whom no one of the Christian Fathers was more vehemently opposed to the philosophizing of the schools, earnestly contends that the doctrine of the unity of God is constitutional to the human mind. "God," he says, "proves himself to be God, and the one only God, by the very fact that he is known to all nations; for the existence of any other deity than he would first have to be demonstrated. The God of the Jews is the one whom the souls of men call their god. We worship one God, the one whom ye all naturally know, at whose lightnings and thunders ye tremble, at whose benefits ye rejoice. Will ye that we prove the divine existence by the witness of the soul itself, which, although confined by the prison of the body, although circumscribed by bad training, although enervated by lusts and passions, although made the servant of false gods, yet when it recovers itself as from a surfeit, as from a slumber, as from some infirmity, and is in its proper condition of soundness, it calls God by *this* name only, because it is the proper name of the true God. 'Great God,' 'good God,' and 'God grant,' [*deus, not dii*,] are words in every mouth. The soul also witnesses that he is its judge when it says, 'God sees,' 'I commend to God,' 'God shall recompense me.' Oh! testimony of a soul naturally Christian, [that is, monotheistic.] Finally, in pronouncing these words, it looks not to the Roman capitol, but to heaven; for it knows the dwelling place of the true God: from him and from thence it descended." *Calvin* (*Inst. I. 10*) seems to have had these statements in his eye, in the following remarks: "In almost all ages, religion has been generally corrupted. It is true, indeed, that the name of one Supreme God has been universally known and celebrated. For those who used to worship a multitude of deities, whenever they spake according to the genuine sense of nature, used simply the name of God in the *singular* number, as though they were contented with one God. And this was wisely remarked by Justin Martyr, who for this purpose wrote a book, *On the Monarchy of God*, in which he demonstrates, from numerous testimonies, that the unity of God was a principle universally impressed on the hearts of men. *Tertullian* (*De Idolatria*) also proves the same point from the common phraseology. But since all men, without exception, have become vain in their understandings, all their natural perception of the divine unity has only served to render them inexcusable." In consonance with these views the Presbyterian *Confession of Faith* (ch. i.) affirms that "the light of nature, and the works of creation and providence, do so far manifest the goodness, wisdom, and power of God, as to leave men inexcusable."

The answer is plain and decisive, and derivable out of the Apostle's own statements. In order to establish the guiltiness of a rational creature before the bar of God, it is not necessary to show that he has lived in the seventh heavens, and under a blaze of moral intelligence like that of the archangel Gabriel. It is only necessary to show that he has enjoyed some degree of moral light, and that he has not lived up to it. Any creature who knows more than he practices is a guilty creature. If the light in the pagan's intellect concerning God and the moral law, small though it be, is yet actually in advance of the inclination and affections of his heart, and the actions of his life, he deserves to be punished like any and every other creature under the divine government, of whom the same thing is true. Grades of knowledge vary indefinitely. No two men upon the planet, no two men in Christendom itself, possess precisely the same degree of moral intelligence. There are men walking the streets of this city to-day, under the full light of the Christian revelation, whose notions respecting God and law are exceedingly dim and inadequate; and there are others whose views are clear and accurate in a high degree. But there is not a person in this city, young or old, ignorant or cultivated, in the parlours of vice or in the saloons of wealth, whose knowledge of God is not in advance of his character. Ask the young thief in the subterranean haunts of vice and crime, if he does not know more of moral truth than he puts in practice, and if he renders an honest answer, it is in the affirmative. Ask the most besotted soul, immersed and petrified in pleasure, if his career upon earth has been in accordance with his own knowledge and conviction of what is right and required by his Maker, and he will answer no, if he answers truly. This is the condemnation, that light, in varying degrees it is true, but always in some degree, falls upon the pathway of every man, but he loves darkness rather than light, because his heart and deeds are evil.

And this principle will be applied to the pagan world in the day of the great winding up of human history. It is so applied by St. Paul. He himself concedes that the Gentile has not enjoyed all the advantages of the Jew, and argues that the ungodly Jew will be visited with a more severe punishment than the ungodly Gentile. But he expressly affirms that the pagan is under law, and knows that he is; that he shows the work of the law that is written in his heart, his conscience also bearing witness, and his thoughts the meanwhile accusing him. (Rom. 2 : 15.) But the knowledge of the law implies the knowledge of God in an equal degree. Who can feel himself amenable to a moral law, without at the same time thinking of its author? The law and the law-giver are indivisible. The one is the mirror and index of the other. If the eye opens dimly upon the commandment, it opens dimly upon the Sovereign; if it sees eternal right and law with

clear and celestial vision, it then looks directly into the face of God. Law and God are correlative to each other; and just so far, consequently, as the heathen understands the law that is written on the heart, does he apprehend the Being who sitteth upon the circle of the heavens, and who impinges himself upon the consciousness of man. This being so, it is plain that we can confront the ungodly pagan with the same charge of guilt before the Eternal Judge with which we confront the ungodly nominal Christian. We can tell him with positiveness, wherever we find him—be it under the burning zone of Africa, or in the frozen home of the Esquimaux—that he knows more than he puts in practice. We will concede to him that the quantum of his moral knowledge is very stinted and meager; but in the same breath we will remind him that, small as it is, he has not lived up to it; that he, too, has “come short;” that he, too, knowing God in the dimmest, faintest degree, has yet not glorified him as God in the slightest, faintest manner. The Bible sends the ungodly and licentious pagan to hell upon the same principle that it sends the ungodly and licentious nominal Christian. It is the just principle enunciated by our Lord Christ, the judge of quick and dead, when he says: “He who knew his master’s will [clearly] and did it not, shall be beaten with many stripes; and he who knew not his master’s will [clearly, but knew it dimly] and did it not, shall be beaten with few stripes.” (Luke 12 : 47, 48.)

The present and future condition of the heathen world is a subject that has enlisted the interest of two very different classes of men. The Church of God has pondered, and labored, and prayed over this subject, and will continue to do so till the millennium. And the disbeliever in revelation has also turned his mind to the consideration of this black mass of ignorance and misery which welters upon the globe like a chaotic ocean; these teeming millions of barbarians and savages who render the aspect of the world so sad and so dark. The church, we need not say, have accepted the Biblical theory, and have traced the wretched condition of the pagan world, as St. Paul does, to their sin and transgression. They have held that every pagan is a rational creature, and by virtue of that fact has known something of the moral law; and that, to the extent of the knowledge he has had, he is as guilty for the transgression of law, and as really under its condemnation, as the dweller under the light of revelation and civilization. They have maintained that every human creature has enjoyed sufficient light, in the workings of natural reason and conscience, and in the impressions that are made by the glory and the terror of the natural world above and around him, to bring him in guilty before the Everlasting Judge. For this reason, the church has denied that the pagan is an innocent creature, or that he can stand in the judgment before the Searcher of hearts. For this reason, the

church has believed the declaration of the Apostle John, that "the whole world lieth in wickedness," (1 John 5 : 19,) and has endeavored to obey the command of him who came to redeem pagans as much as nominal Christians, to go and preach the Gospel to every creature, because every creature is a guilty creature.

But the disbeliever in revelation adopts the theory of human innocence, and looks upon all the ignorance and wretchedness of paganism as he does upon the suffering, decay, and death in the vegetable and animal world. It is the necessary condition, he asserts, of all created existence; and as decay and death in the vegetable and animal worlds only result in a more luxuriant vegetation, and an increased multiplication of living creatures, so the evils and woes of the hundreds of generations, and the millions of individuals, during the sixty centuries that have elapsed since the origin of man, will all of them minister to the ultimate and everlasting weal of the race. There is no need, therefore, he maintains, of endeavoring to save such feeble and ignorant beings from judicial condemnation and eternal penalty. Such finiteness and helplessness can not be put into relations to such an awful attribute as the eternal nemesis of God. Can it be, he asks, that the millions upon millions that have been born, lived their brief hour, enjoyed their little joys, and suffered their sharp sorrows, and then dropped into "the dark backward and abysm of time," have really been guilty creatures, and have gone down to an endless hell?

But what does all this reasoning and querying imply? Will the objector really take the position and stand to it, that the pagan man is not a rational and responsible creature? that he does not possess sufficient knowledge of moral truth to justify his being brought to the bar of judgment? Will he say that the population that knew enough to build the pyramids did not know enough to break the law of God? Will he affirm that the civilization of Babylon and Nineveh, of Greece and Rome, did not contain within it enough of moral intelligence to constitute a foundation for future rewards and punishments? Will he tell us that the people of Sodom and Gomorrah stood upon the same plane with the brutes that perish and the trees of the field that rot and die, having no idea of God, knowing nothing of the distinction between right and wrong, and never feeling the pains of an accusing conscience? Will he maintain that the populations of India, in the midst of whom one of the most subtle and ingenious systems of pantheism has sprung up with the luxuriance and involutions of one of their own jungles, and which has enervated the whole religious sentiment of the Hindoo race as opium has enervated their physical frame—will he maintain that such an untiring and persistent mental activity as this is incapable of apprehending the first principles of ethics and natural religion,

which in comparison with the complicated and obscure ratiocinations of Boodhism are clear as water, and lucid as atmospheric air? In other connections, this theorist does not speak in this style. In other connections, and for a different purpose, he enlarges upon the dignity of man, of every man, and eulogizes the power of reason which so exalts him in the scale of being. With Hamlet, he dilates in proud and swelling phrase: "What a piece of work is man! How noble in reason! how infinite in faculties! in form and moving, how express and admirable! in action how like an angel! in apprehension how like a god! the beauty of the world! the paragon of animals!" It is from that very class of theorizers who deny that the heathen are in danger of eternal perdition, and who represent the whole missionary enterprise as a work of supererogation, that we receive the most extravagant accounts of the natural powers and gifts of man. Now, if these powers and gifts do belong to human nature by its constitution, they certainly lay a foundation for responsibility; and all such theorists must be able to show that the pagan has made a right use of them, and has thought and acted in conformity with this large amount of truth and reason, with which, according to their own statement, he is endowed, or else they consign him, as St. Paul does, to "the wrath of God which is revealed from heaven, against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who hold the truth in unrighteousness." If you assert that the pagan man has had no talents at all committed to him, and can prove your assertion, you are consistent in denying that he can be summoned to the bar of God, and be tried for everlasting life or death. But if you concede that he has had one talent, or two talents committed to his charge; and still more, if you exaggerate his gifts, and endow him with five or ten talents—then it is impossible for you to save him from the retributions to come, except you can prove a perfect administration and use of the trust.

II. And this brings us to the consideration of the second fact upon which St. Paul rests his position that the pagan world is in a state of condemnation. He concedes that man outside of the pale of revelation is characterized, not indeed by total, but by great ignorance of God and divine things; that his moral knowledge is exceedingly dim and highly distorted. But the fault is in himself that it is so. "As they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind."

The question very naturally arises, and is frequently urged by the unbeliever: How comes it to pass that the knowledge of God, of which the Apostle speaks, and which he affirms to be innate and constitutional to the human mind, should become so vitiated in the pagan world? The majority of mankind are polytheists and idolaters, and have been for thousands of years. Can it be

that St. Paul is correct in affirming that the doctrine that there is only one God is native to the human mind—that the pagan “knows” this God, and yet does not glorify him as God? The majority of mankind are earthly and sensual, and have been for thousands of years. Can it be that St. Paul is correct in saying that there is a moral law written upon their heart, forbidding such carnality, and enjoining purity and holiness? Some theorists argue that because the pagan man does not obey the law, therefore he does not know the law; and that because he has not revered and worshiped the one Supreme Deity, therefore he does not possess the idea of such a being. They look out upon the pagan populations, and see them bowing down to stocks and stones, and witness their immersion in the abominations of heathenism, and conclude that these millions of rational beings really know no better, and that therefore it is unjust to hold them responsible for their polytheism and moral corruption. But why do they confine this species of reasoning to the pagan world? Why do they not bring it into nominal Christendom, and apply it there? Why does not this theorist go into the midst of European civilization—into the heart of London or Paris—and gauge the moral knowledge of the sensualist by the moral character of the sensualist? Why does he not tell us that because this civilized man acts no better, that therefore he knows no better? Why does he not maintain that because this voluptuary breaks all the commandments in the decalogue, therefore he must be ignorant of all the commandments in the decalogue? that because he neither fears nor loves the one only God, therefore he does not know that there is any such being?

It will never do to estimate man's moral knowledge by man's moral character. He knows more than he practices. And there is not so much difference in this particular between some men in nominal Christendom, and some men in Heathendom, as is sometimes imagined. The moral knowledge of those who lie in the lower strata of Christian civilization, and those who lie in the higher strata of Paganism, is probably not so very far apart. Place the imbruted outcasts of our metropolitan population beside the Indian hunter, with his belief in the Great Spirit, and his worship without images or pictorial representations;* beside the stalwart Mandingo of the high table lands of Central Africa, with his active and enterprising spirit, carrying on manufactures and trade with all the keenness of any civilized worldling; beside the native merchants and lawyers of Calcutta, who still cling to their ancestral Boodhism, or else substitute French infidelity in its place; place the lowest of the highest beside the highest of the lowest, and tell us if the difference is so very marked. Sin, like

* There are no profane words in the (Iowa) Indian language; no light or profane way of speaking of the “Great Spirit.”—*Foreign Missionary*, May, 1863, p. 337

holiness, is a mighty leveller. The "dislike to retain God" in the consciousness, the aversion of the heart toward the purity of the moral law, vitiates the native perceptions alike in Christendom and Paganism.

The theory that the pagan is possessed of such an amount and degree of moral knowledge as has been specified has awakened some apprehensions in the minds of some Christian theologians, and has led them unintentionally to foster the opposite theory, which, if strictly adhered to, would lift-off all responsibility from the pagan world, would bring them in innocent at the bar of God, and would render the whole enterprise of Christian missions a superfluity and an absurdity. Their motive has been good. They have feared to attribute any degree of accurate knowledge of God, and the moral law, to the pagan world, lest they should thereby conflict with the doctrine of total depravity. They have erroneously supposed that if they should concede to every man, by virtue of his moral constitution, some correct apprehensions of ethics and natural religion, it would follow that there is some native goodness in him. But light in the intellect is very different from life and affection in the heart. It is one thing to know the law of God, and quite another thing to obey it. Even if we should concede to the degraded pagan, or the degraded dweller in the haunts of vice in Christian lands, all the intellectual knowledge of God and the moral law that is possessed by the ruined archangel himself, we should not be adding a particle to his moral character, or his moral excellence. There is nothing of a holy quality in the mere intellectual perception that there is one Supreme Being, and that he has issued a pure and holy law for the guidance of all rational creatures. The mere doctrine of the divine unity will save no man. There is no redemptive power in it. It forgives no sin, and it delivers from no bondage to sin. "Thou believest," says St. James, "that there is one God; thou doest well; the devils also believe and tremble." Satan himself is a monotheist, and knows very clearly all the commandments of God; but his heart and will are in demoniacal antagonism with them. And so it is, only in a lower degree, in the instance of the pagan and of the natural man in every age and in every clime. This intellectual perception, therefore, this constitutional apprehension of the first principles of natural religion, instead of lifting up disobedient man into a higher and more favorable position before the eternal bar, casts him down to a deeper perdition. Light that is abused ministers to a greater condemnation; and the Eternal Judge will say to every man, Jew or Gentile, that has held any portion or degree of moral truth in unrighteousness, as his apostle said to the unfaithful Jew: "Thou therefore that teachest another, teachest thou not thyself? thou that preachest a man should not steal, dost thou steal? thou that sayest a man should not commit adultery,

dost thou commit adultery?" (Rom. 2 : 21, 22.) If the heathen knew nothing at all of his Maker and his duty, he could not be held responsible, and would not be summoned to judgment. As St. Paul affirms: "Where there is no law, there is no transgression." But if when he knew God in some degree, he glorified him not as God to that degree; and if, when the moral law was written upon his heart, he went counter to its requirements, and actually heard the accusing voice of his own conscience after so doing, then his mouth must be stopped, and he must become guilty before his judge, like any and every other disobedient creature.

It is this serious and damning fact in the history of man upon the globe, that St. Paul brings to view, in the affirmation that the pagan world "did not like to retain God in their knowledge." He accounts for all the idolatry and sensuality, all the darkness and vain imaginations of paganism, by referring them to the aversion of the natural heart. The primary difficulty was in the affections of the pagan, and not in his understanding. He knew too much for his own comfort in sin. The contrast between the divine purity that was mirrored in his conscience, and the sinfulness that was wrought into his heart and will, rendered this inborn constitutional idea of God a painful one. It was a fire in the bones. If the Psalmist, a renewed man, yet not entirely free from human corruption, could say: "I thought of God, and was troubled," much more must the totally depraved man of paganism be filled with terror, when in the thoughts of his heart, in the hour when the accusing conscience was at work, he brought to mind the one great God of gods, the vast unseen Power, whom he did not glorify, and whom he had offended. It was no wonder, therefore, that he did not like to retain the idea of such a being in his consciousness, and that he adopted all possible expedients to get rid of it. The Apostle informs us that the pagan actually called in his imagination to his aid, in order to extirpate, if possible, all his native and rational ideas and convictions upon religious subjects. He became vain in his imaginations, and his foolish heart, as a consequence, was darkened, and he changed the glory of the incorruptible God, the spiritual unity of the deity, into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things (Rom. 1 : 21-23). He invented idolatry, and all those "gay religions full of pomp and gold," in order to blunt the edge of that sharp, spiritual conception of God which was continually cutting and lacerating his wicked and his sensual heart. Hiding himself amidst the columns of his idolatrous temples, and under the smoke of his idolatrous incense, he thought, like Adam, to escape from the view and inspection of that Infinite One, who from the creation of the world downward makes known to all men his eternal power and godhead (Rom. 1 : 20); who, as St. Paul taught the philosophers of Athens, is not far from any one

of his rational creatures (Acts 17 : 27) ; who, as the same Apostle taught the pagan Lycaonians, though in time past he suffered all nations to walk in their own ways, yet left not himself without witness, in that he did good, and gave them rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling their hearts with food and gladness (Acts 14 : 16, 17).

The first step in the process of mutilating the original idea of God as a unity and an invisible Spirit, is seen in those pantheistic religions which lie behind all the mythologies of the ancient world, like a nebulous vapor, out of which the more distinct idols and images of paganism are struggling. Here, the notion of the divine unity is still preserved ; but the divine personality and holiness are lost. God becomes a vague impersonal power, with no moral qualities and no religious attributes ; and it is difficult to say which is worst in its moral influence, this pantheism which, while retaining the doctrine of the divine unity, yet denudes the Deity of all that renders him an object of love and reverence, or the grosser idolatries that succeeded it. For man can not love, with all his mind and heart and soul and strength, a vast force working blindly through infinite space and everlasting time.

And the second and last stage in the process of vitiating the true idea of God appears in that polytheism in the midst of which St. Paul lived, and labored, and preached, and died ; in that seductive and beautiful paganism, that classical idolatry, which still addresses the human taste in such a fascinating manner in the Venus de Medici and the Apollo Belvidere. The idea of the unity of God is now mangled and cut up into the "gods many," and the "lords many ;" into the thirty thousand divinities of the pagan pantheon. This completes the process. God now gives his guilty creature over to those vain imaginations of naturalism, sensualism, and idolatry, and to an increasingly darkening mind, until in the lowest forms of heathenism he so distorts and suppresses the con-created idea of the Deity, that some speculatists assert that it does not belong to his constitution, and that his Maker never endowed him with it. How is the gold become dim ! How is the most fine gold changed !

But it will be objected that all this lies in the past. This is the account of a process that has required centuries, yea millenniums, to bring about. A hundred generations have been engaged in transmuting the monotheism with which the human race started, into the pantheism and polytheism in which the great majority of it is now involved. How do you establish the guilt of those at the end of the line ? How can you charge upon the present generation of pagans the same culpability that Paul imputed to their ancestors eighteen centuries ago, and that Noah the preacher of righteousness denounced upon the antediluvian pagan ? As the deteriorating process advances, does not the guilt diminish ; and

now in these ends of the ages, and in these dark habitations of cruelty, has not the culpability run down to a minimum which God in the day of judgment will "wink at?"

We answer no; because, in the first place, the structure of the human mind is precisely the same that it was when the Sodomites held down the truth in unrighteousness, and the Roman populace turned up their thumbs that they might see the last drops of blood ebb slowly from the red gash in the dying gladiator's side. Man, in his deepest degradation, in his most hardened depravity, is still a rational intelligence; and though he should continue to sin on indefinitely, through cycles of time as long as those of geology, he can not unmake himself; he can not unmould his immortal essence, and absolutely eradicate all his moral ideas. Even paganism itself has its fluctuations of moral knowledge. The early Roman, in the days of Numa, was highly ethical in his views of the Deity, and his conceptions of moral law. Varro informs us that for a period of one hundred and seventy years the Romans worshipped their gods without any images;* and Sallust denominates these pristine Romans "religiosissimi mortales." And how often does the missionary discover a tribe, or a race, whose moral intelligence is higher than that of the average of paganism. Nay, the same race, or tribe, passes from one phase of polytheism to another; in one instance exhibiting many of the elements and truths of natural religion, and in another almost entirely suppressing them. These facts prove that the pagan man is under supervision; that he is under the righteous despotism of moral ideas and convictions; that God is not far from him; that he lives and moves and has his being in his Maker; and that God does not leave himself without witness in his constitutional structure. Therefore it is that this sea of rational intelligence thus surges and sways in the masses of paganism; sometimes dashing the creature up the heights, and sometimes sending him down into the depths.

But we answer no, to the question that is put by the objector, for a second reason, that is still more conclusive, because it is still more practical. The guilt of the pagan can not be reduced to a minimum and disappear, because, wherever he is found, he is found to be self-willed and determined in sin. He does not like to retain truth in his mind, or to obey it in his heart. Go into the center of Africa to-day; select out the most imbruted heathen; bring to his remembrance that class of truths with which he is already acquainted, and add to them the still larger class that issue from revelation; and you will find that he is predetermined against them. He takes sides, with all the depth and intensity of his being, with that sinfulness which is common to man, and which it is the object of both ethics and the Gospel to oppose and remove. This pagan loves the sin which is forbidden, more than

* Varro, apud Plutarch, *Numa*, 8; *Augustine*: *De civitate dei*, IV. xxxi.

he loves the holiness that is commanded. We grant that the temptations that assail him are very powerful; but are not some of the temptations that beset any and every man very powerful? We grant that this wretched slave of vice and pollution can not possibly break off his sins by righteousness, without the renewing and sanctifying grace of God; but neither can any man in the heart of Christendom. He loves his chains and his bondage, even as every other sinner loves them; and this proves that his moral corruption is the same self-willed thing in principle with that of mankind in every age and grade of civilization. It is the rooted aversion of the human heart toward the purity and holiness of God; it is "the carnal mind which is at enmity against God, for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." (Rom. 8:7.)

Ask the faithful and devoted missionaries who go down into these habitations of cruelty to pour more light into the mind, and to induce the pagan to leave his idols and his sensualism; ask them if they find that sinful human nature is any different there from what it is elsewhere, so far as yielding to the claims of God and law is concerned. Do they tell you that they are uniformly successful in persuading these sinners to leave their sins? that they never find any self-will, any determined opposition to the holy law of purity, any preference of a life of license, with its woes here upon earth, and hereafter in hell, to a life of self-denial with its joys eternal? On the contrary, they testify that the old maxim upon which so many millions of the human family in nominal Christendom act: "Enjoy the present, and jump the life to come," is the rule for the mass of the heathen population, of whom so few can be persuaded to leave their idols and their lusts. Like the people of Israel when expostulated with by the prophet Jeremiah for their idolatry and pollution, the majority of the pagan world, when endeavors have been made to reclaim them, have said to the missionary: "There is no hope: no; for I have loved strangers, and after them will I go." (Jer. 2:25.) There is not a single individual of them all who has been necessitated to do wrong. Each one of them has a will of his own, and loves the sin that is destroying him more than he loves the holiness that would save him. Notwithstanding all the horrible accompaniments of sin in heathen society, the wretched creature prefers to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season, rather than come out and separate himself from the unclean thing, and begin that holy warfare and obedience to which his God and Saviour invite him. This, we repeat, proves that the sin is not forced upon the rational creature. For if he hated his sin; nay, if he felt weary and heavy-laden because of it, he would leave it. The Christian missionary announces a free grace, and a proffered assistance of the Holy Ghost, of which he may avail himself at any moment. Had he the feeling of the

weary and penitent prodigal, the same father's house is ever open for his return, and the same father seeing him on his return, though yet a great way off, would run and fall upon his neck and kiss him. But the heart is hard, and the spirit is utterly selfish, and the will is perverse and determined, and therefore the natural knowledge of God and his law which this sinner possesses by his very constitution, and the added knowledge which the efforts of benevolent Christians have imparted to him, are not strong enough to overcome his inclination and induce him to break off his sins by righteousness. To him, also, as well as to every sin-loving man, these solemn words will be spoken in the day of final adjudication: "The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness, and unrighteousness of men who hold down (*κατεχειν*) the truth in unrighteousness; because that which may be known of God is manifest within them; for God hath showed it unto them. For the invisible things of him, even his eternal power and godhead, are clearly seen from the creation of the world, being understood by the things that are made; so that they are without excuse: because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God."

The subject which we have thus discussed is exceedingly fertile in its inferences and teachings; but we shall limit ourselves to two, that have a direct bearing upon the enterprise of Foreign Missions.

1. In the first place it is evident that if the positions that have been taken are correct, natural religion consigns the entire pagan world to eternal perdition.

Strictly speaking, it is not Christianity that sends the race of mankind to hell, but it is ethics. Christ himself says that he came not into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved. (John 3 : 17.) Men are condemned already, previous to redemption, by the law written on their hearts; by their natural convictions of moral truth; by natural religion, whose truths and dictates they have failed to put in practice. Those theorists, therefore, who reject revealed religion, and remand man back to the first principles of ethics and morality as the only religion that he needs, send him to a tribunal that damns him. "Tell me," says St. Paul, "ye that desire to be under the law, do ye not hear the law? The law is not of faith, but the man that doeth them shall live by them." (Gal. 4 : 21; 3 : 12.) "Circumcision verily profiteth if thou keep the law; but if thou be a breaker of the law, thy circumcision is made uncircumcision." (Rom. 2 : 25.) If man had been true to all the principles and precepts of natural religion, it would indeed be religion enough for him. But he has not been thus true. The entire list of vices and sins recited by St. Paul in the first chapter of Romans, is as contrary to natural religion as it is to revealed. And it is precisely because the pagan world has not obeyed the principles of natural

religion, and is under a curse and a bondage therefor, that it is in perishing need of the truths of revealed religion. Little do those know what they are saying, when they propose to find a salvation for the pagan in the mere light of natural reason and conscience. What pagan has ever realized the truths of natural conscience in his inward character, and his outward life? What pagan is there in all the generations that will not be found guilty before the bar of natural religion? What heathen will not need an atonement for his failure to live up even to the light of nature? Nay, what is the entire sacrificial cultus of heathenism but a confession that the whole heathen world finds and feels itself to be guilty at the bar of natural reason and conscience? The accusing voice within them wakes their forebodings and fearful looking-for of divine judgment, and they endeavor to propitiate the offended Power by their offerings and sacrifices.

2. In the second place, it follows inevitably from these positions of St. Paul, concerning the guilt of the pagan, that nothing but revealed religion can save him from an eternity of sin and woe.

Our Lord Jesus Christ well knew the significance of his last command to his apostles and his church, to go into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature. He knew what a measure and degree of moral truth had been wrought into the structure of the millions of mankind. He knew that there is a light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world. (John 1 : 9.) He knew that that truth had been held in unrighteousness, and that that light had shined in the darkness that comprehended it not. He knew that upon the plane of natural religion and conscience the responsible creature stood a guilty criminal; that he was without excuse; that he was utterly unsheltered, and must be pierced through and through by the glittering shafts of the law which he had known, and which he had violated. The incarnation of the eternal Son of God is utterly unintelligible except upon the supposition that every human creature is a guilty creature; and this guilt is inconceivable except upon the supposition that when he knew God he glorified him not as God.

It is this dark and awful fact which the Church of Christ is continually to keep in mind. The whole world lieth in wickedness, (1 John 5 : 19,) and wickedness is crime, and crime must either be canceled by the blood of the God-man, or be punished through endless ages. We are summoned to take the same view of this wretched and sinful world which the Founder of Christianity took. We are to look through his eyes, and breathe his spirit. His eyes are a flame of fire, and pierce through all the self-deceptions by which man would extenuate or nullify his sin; and his spirit is that of self-sacrificing love to the guilty. If the Man of Sorrows saw in the mass of mankind a mass of perdition, his followers must see the same. If in the midst of all his tenderness and self-

sacrificing love for the human soul, he never uttered a single word that leads us to suppose that that soul merits any thing but hell-punishment, or will receive any thing but this, if it stands upon its own merits in the day of judgment; if the pitiful Son of God and Son of Man, in all his various representations of the eternal future, never spoke a syllable that can be tortured into the theory of the innocence of any human being, be he Jew or Gentile, barbarian, Scythian, bond or free, young or old, then the disciple is to be as the Master. The Church of Christ must look out upon the millions of India, China, and Africa, as the Son of God looked down upon them from the heights of the eternal throne, and must behold in them millions upon millions of guilty and lost moral agents. Like him they must engage in efforts for their salvation; and not waste their energies in futile queryings and doubtings. The problems before the Eternal Mind, respecting the sin and salvation of man, were far more difficult of solution than those which beset the mind of the Christian or the skeptic. For our Lord and Saviour knew infallibly how many millions upon millions of the race, for whom he proposed to pour out his life-blood, would reject him. He knew long beforehand how many millions upon millions of this miserable and infatuated race would resist, and ultimately quench the only Spirit that could renovate and save them. The checkered career of the Christian Church, its alternating progress and decline in different ages and countries, the unfaithfulness of his own redeemed, and their lukewarmness in obeying his parting command to evangelize the nations—the whole career of Christianity, so discouraging in many of its aspects, lay distinct and clear before that omniscient eye. But it did not dampen his love or his ardor (if we may use such a word) for an instant. Even to his own view, much of his love and self-sacrifice would run to waste, so far as the actual redemption of immortal souls is concerned. He knew that, like his prophet, he was to stretch out his hand all day long, yea, ages after ages, to a disobedient and a gainsaying race. But he never faltered, and he never hesitated. He veiled his deity in the "muddy vesture of decay," and suffered and died in it, with the same willingness and alacrity as if he had foreknown that every human soul would have welcomed the great salvation.

Now if our Lord and Master, knowing infallibly that millions upon millions would trample upon his blood, and that millions upon millions, through the unfaithfulness of his own church, would never even hear of the passion in Gethsemane and Calvary: if our Lord and Master, in the face of these discouragements, while sternly as the eternal nemesis of God charging home an infinite guilt upon the human race, yet tenderly as a mother for a child, received upon his own person the awful vengeance of that nemesis, we and all his people, in all time, must breathe in his spirit and

imitate his example. We have no infinite and infallible knowledge by which to discourage us in our efforts at human salvation. We know not who will reject the message, or whether any will. We can not

"look into the seeds of time,
And say which grain will grow, and which will not."

We only know that the blood of Jesus Christ cleanses all sin from every soul upon whom it drops. And we know that our Redeemer and King has commanded us to proclaim this fact to every human creature. Events and successes are with him. The church has nothing to do but obey orders, like soldiers in a campaign.

The great and the simple work before the church is to sprinkle the nations with the blood of atonement. This it does, instrumentally, when it preaches forgiveness of sins through Christ's oblation. The one great and awful fact in human history, we have seen, is the fact of guilt. And the great and glorious fact which the mercy of God has now set over against it, is the fact of atonement. It requires no high degree of civilization to apprehend either of these facts. The benighted pagan is as easily convicted as the most highly educated philosopher; and his reception of the atonement of God is, perhaps, even less hindered by pride and prejudice.

Let the church, therefore, dismissing all secondary and inferior aims, however excellent and desirable in themselves, go forth and proclaim to all the nations that "they are without excuse: because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God;" and also that "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life."

SERMON XVIII.

SALVATION BY GRACE.*

"By grace ye are saved."—EPHESIANS 2: 5.

No thought is more familiar to our minds than this—that all mankind are sinners. It is impossible for those who receive the Bible as the word of God to gainsay or to doubt this truth. That Bible contains explicit and reiterated and pathetic statements of human depravity. It shows us whence it sprung, dwells upon its manifestations, depicts its completeness and depth, and laments over its injuriousness and ruin. Putting aside all explicit state-

* Author's name not furnished with the manuscript.

ments, however, the fact of human depravity is implied in all the doctrines and plan of salvation. The Gospel takes our apostacy for granted, and addresses itself to sinners, and to sinners only. Its offers are made to sinners; its provisions are adapted to sinners; itself is nothing else primarily than a mode of deliverance from sin. This Scripture account of our nature and state is amply confirmed by experience. Every man at all instructed in the law of God has learned that he possesses a disposition to violate that law, and that he has actually violated it, in numberless instances and in numberless ways. The multiform wickedness that fills the earth—almost unmingled and unrelieved—conclusively proves the total depravity of the race. Every effect must have its cause: a tree can not grow without a root. If, therefore, the experience of every man be the experience of a sinner, and the history of the world be the history of sinners, there must be a deep hid principle of sinfulness in universal human nature. Consciousness of sin includes a sense of ill-desert, or a sense of just exposure to punishment. Every man possesses this. Conscience invariably pronounces upon the guiltiness of moral evil; and what is guiltiness but that quality of an action by which it properly subjects the man to the infliction of the penalty of the divine law? Whence arise the fear of God, and the apprehensions of wrath, and the shrinking from the future, which agitate the bosom of the offender, but from the consciousness and settled persuasion that he merits, from infinite holiness and justice, only tribulation and anguish? The natural condition of men, therefore—oh that they felt its peril and its horror!—is one of depravity, actual pollution, and exposure to the awful wrath of a holy God. Deliverance from that condition is what the Bible calls salvation. The simple but sublime and comprehensive declaration of our text is, that this salvation is of grace. The word grace is used in Scripture to represent kindness as manifested toward the ill-deserving; any unmerited favor is prompted by a gracious disposition. Mercy, as distinguished from grace, is kindness shown to the suffering; it does not contemplate the moral character of its objects. It very naturally occurs, that while the word grace is mainly used in the Bible to express the disposition of kindness toward the ill-deserving, it is sometimes employed to denote the acts of favor themselves. Says St. Paul, "By the grace of God I am what I am," where he undoubtedly means, "By the divine assistance, gratuitously afforded, I am what I am." The influences of the Holy Spirit, especially, are called grace; and the fruits of the Spirit are styled graces. We have a perfect right to take the word, as occurring in the text, in both these intimately-related senses. It will well bear both, and probably was meant to do so. So understood, the meaning widens. The proposition then is, not only that salvation is gratuitous considered as an ob-

jective blessing, but also that, considered as a subjective work, it is effected by divine power gratuitously afforded. It is to the illustration of this great and fundamental truth that I invite your attention. And I am much mistaken, brethren, if the discussion of this subject shall not elicit very much to arouse the careless, to direct the inquiring, and to increase the humility, vigor, and comfort of the Christian's piety.

I. In the first place, then, it is a matter of pure grace that any provision has been made for the salvation of sinners. We have already said that sin implies guiltiness—that is, just exposure to punishment. This is simply another way of saying that God might, with perfect justice, have left sinners to suffer the misery which they deserved. But all men are sinners: therefore he might thus have left the whole race. Furthermore, the sin of all men is infinitely heinous—that is, worthy of an infinite and endless punishment. The law and threatenings of heaven, of course, imply this; and their implication should be enough to satisfy us of its truth. But it is also capable of independent proof, from the very nature of God. If the Most High be a Being infinite in all his glorious perfections, he possesses an infinite claim upon the reverence, love, and service of all his intelligent creatures; and this claim is wholly irrespective of their dispositions and circumstances. The guiltiness of an offense takes its color and dimensions from the character and claims of him against whom it has been committed. Sin, therefore, which violates all the obligations that bind the creature to the Creator, must be guilty to a degree that is not only incomprehensible, but actually infinite. That Creator is infinite in his being—infininitely excellent and lovely in all his attributes. His claims upon the creature's love and obedience must, therefore, be actually infinite; and it follows, by irresistible inference, that the sin of the creature, which spurns those claims, must be infinitely evil. This is only to say that the whole race of men might justly have been left to suffer the punishment which the divine law pronounces—eternal banishment from heaven and joy, hopeless confinement in the regions of woe. It must, therefore, be a matter of pure grace that any provision for their salvation has been made. If they deserved the very opposite, they did not deserve this. Yes, my hearers, the glory of God would have shone without abatement; the praises of God would have rung with unceasing and unflagging triumph; the worship of all holy beings would have been as profound, and their love as ardent as ever, if no scheme of redemption had ever been devised, and no gracious Saviour had ever been sent to suffer and to bleed on this accursed earth.

Plain as it seems, therefore, that the providing of salvation is a matter of mere grace—clearly as it is implied in the very nature of

the terms sin and salvation, and in the whole tenor of Scripture—it is not unfrequently overlooked or denied. Whole systems of theology are founded upon the assumption that providing a way of deliverance for sinners was an act of justice on the part of God; and many of the popular objections against the doctrines of grace proceed upon the same absurd idea. How often is it said and written: if men are either born in sin, or placed in circumstances that render sin inevitable, then God must be bound to provide a way of pardon! Such objections as this sound fair and plausible to the natural reason. It well accords with the pride of the human heart, to seek to lay back upon God the blame of our condition, and lay him under obligations for our rescue. But if we are to be guided by Scripture at all, we must forever dismiss such thoughts. There the invariable representation is, that, supposing the fall to have taken place, and supposing the continuance of the human race in their fallen and necessarily sinful state, it is still true that the gift of Christ and the mission of the Holy Ghost are acts of sovereign and undeserved mercy. They are always represented as the greatest possible displays of the grace and love of God. This is a vital and all-pervading truth, giving character to the whole economy under which we live. Before you can deny it and assume the opposite, you must change the language and the argument of Scripture from beginning to end, and you must reverse the feelings and experiences of every Christian's heart. To show that the invention and providing of salvation are not purely gracious, would make sudden silence among the redeemed of heaven—would stifle their praises and break their sounding harps. Did I deem it necessary to enter into argument against the plausible, but most unsound objection, that if men are either born in sin or placed in circumstances that render sin inevitable, then God must be bound to provide a way of pardon, it would be enough to remind you that our first father fell, not as an individual man, but as the representative or federal head of the whole race. God had a perfect right to constitute him our representative. As it was no injustice, so also it was no unkindness toward us. The arrangement was a favorable one. Now, it is easy to admit, and impossible to deny, that Adam's sin utterly disqualified him from holding any claim upon God's mercy. If, however, he sinned as our federal head, it equally disqualified us, his posterity. This is not to say that we had precisely and literally the same hand in his iniquity as Adam had, but that, from the terms of the covenant, we with perfect justice share the consequences equally with him, and so are equally shut out from any claim upon divine clemency. But there is no need of this laborious reasoning upon the subject, at all. We are all sinners, conscious sinners and excuseless sinners, before God. We therefore know and feel that to provide salvation for us must be a matter of pure and sovereign

grace. To be sinners, no matter how we came so, is to be utterly undeserving of any favor from heaven, and justly exposed to eternal punishment. Sin can not be excused, or else it would be no longer sin; and while there is guiltiness in it, it renders it forever absurd that God should be bound to show us any mercy.

II. In the second place, we remark, that the application of salvation is also a matter of grace. If God is under no obligations to save any, as we have seen, then it certainly follows that he may, without a shadow of injustice, determine whom he will save. This is only to act as a sovereign—the very character in which he always has acted, not only in this matter but in every thing pertaining to the government of the world. Look for a moment at the history of nations. For ages he withheld the revelation of his will from every people but one, and that one small, despised, and hated. Why were the Jews selected as the depositaries of the Scriptures, rather than the cultivated Egyptians, Assyrians, or Greeks? Why do you not accuse God of injustice in selecting any one nation, and passing by the rest? Why do you not complain of his partiality in opening up a way for his truth among those tribes who now rejoice in its light, and of his cruelty in delaying to send it to the people that yet sit in darkness and the shadow of death? Why not charge him with injustice in raising one people to the height of refinement, and leaving another to its squalidness and barbarism? You would deem it the height of insolence and impiety to do this. But why so, unless because it is true that no nation has any claim upon God's favors, all being entirely undeserving and guilty before him, and that therefore it is perfectly righteous and altogether merciful in him to extend his favors to whomsoever he pleases? But the case is not one whit different when you speak of the particular application of salvation to individuals. Was God unrighteous when he loved Jacob and hated Esau, even before their birth? when he called Abraham alone, leaving great multitudes to perish? when he saved only Noah and his family, not simply from the deluge of water, but also from the deluge of sin and retributive wrath? and when only Lot and his house were preserved from the corruption and doom of the Sodomites? If the particular and sovereign application of salvation is unjust, it must be unjust to some person. Now, to whom is it unjust? To those who are saved? Ask them, and see if they make any complaint against God's righteousness. To those who are not saved? They only suffer what they deserved; and their doom is not one whit aggravated by the simple fact that some others are plucked as brands from the burning. Will any attempt to say that it is unjust in God to save only some of mankind, when he would have been just if he had destroyed them all? Or shall we presume to affirm that God is unmerciful, be-

cause he has mercy on whom he will have mercy? Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say unto him that formed it, why hast thou made me thus? Shall not the judge of the whole world do right? Let us then, without any cavilling or reluctance, take home the truth, that the application of salvation is a matter of pure grace. I would have no reason to complain, if God should leave me to reap the recompense of my sin, while my nearest neighbor is saved. The Sovereign Lord goeth forth among the children of men, and saith to one "live," and he lives—oh what matchless kindness!—while to another he is silent, and he goes on to his death. If thou be among the saved, extol with me the wonderful grace of God, not simply in the general provision of salvation, but also in the special application of it to thy soul. Say thou, in Scripture words, while your heart burns with thankfulness and love: "By the grace of God I am what I am. Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name be all the praise!" This, my hearers, is the invariable representation of the Bible; and this the experience of every true child of God.

III. But, in the third place, we proceed to say that the terms on which salvation is offered are purely gratuitous; that is, justification also is of grace. You do not need to be told, my hearers, that all which is necessary to secure the sinner reconciliation and acceptance with God, has been performed by Christ. Our Saviour's work was complete and final. This is the only view of it which at all accords with the representations of Scripture, and does proper honor to the divine wisdom and love. If this be true, then nothing more need or can be done. The sinner has no penances to perform, no works to accomplish, absolutely nothing to do, as the ground of his pardon and acceptance. He could not do any thing of that kind if he were required, and there is not the slightest necessity for it, if he could. His Saviour has performed a spotless obedience and offered a perfect sacrifice. The divinity of his person gave to both these an infinite value, so that they entirely satisfy the justice of God, and easily secure the fullest salvation for all who are interested in them. Those who believe in him with a self-renouncing faith are thus interested; not that the faith has any thing meritorious in it to secure the imputation of Christ's righteousness, but that there is a natural fitness between it and such imputation. There would be no propriety in saving a soul that was not in the highest sense willing to be saved, and heartily disposed to honor and glorify God for its salvation. Such a thing could not occur under the government of a jealous God, like ours.

It is therefore true that the sinner need not, can not, and does not do any thing as the ground of his pardon and acceptance; his justification by the imputing of his Saviour's righteousness is entirely

of grace. But it is important still further to remark, that there is no preparation necessary on the sinner's part before he is warranted to accept the offered pardon ; he has nothing to do before coming to Christ, and nothing to do but come to Christ. The righteousness of that precious Saviour is offered him in good faith as an absolute gratuity ; he has nothing to do but take it. It is offered him for present acceptance—for acceptance in his present character and condition ; he need not wait one moment ; he has no previous work to perform—nothing to do but take its righteousness gratefully and lovingly at the generous hand of God. There is always misapprehension here on the part of the inquirer. That misapprehension, however, does not spring from any want of clearness or explicitness in the declarations of Scripture, but only from that incredulity and sordid selfishness of the natural heart which utterly disqualifies it to understand the unbounded liberality of God. There is no restriction or limitation to the statement : “ He that believeth in the Son hath everlasting life.” There is no equivocation, mental reservation, or implied condition in the assurance : “ Him that cometh unto me [simply cometh] I will in no wise cast out.” It is quite true that none will thus come—thus believe—who have not some sense of their misery and danger, some sight of the evil that there is in sin ; but this is very different from making these feelings and experiences any part of our warrant for accepting the Gospel. No such warrant is needed, or is possible, other than the free invitation and universal command of God. A man may publish the munificent offer that he will provide a supply of food for all who ask for it, and it may be true that none will ask but the poor and hungry ; but still you would not say that the poverty or hunger was the condition of the gift. There was no condition but the asking. Precisely analogous is the offer of Gospel grace through Jesus Christ. And the distinction which we have been making is far from useless, as it is assuredly just. It takes away from the concerned sinner all pretence for waiting ; it brings home upon his conscience the unrelieved weight of present obligations ; it shuts him up to the matter of immediate action ; and, in case of refusal or neglect, it stops his mouth in utter speechlessness. Here, then, is the only proper language for the soul that hears the gracious invitations of the Gospel :

“ Just as I am, without one plea,
Save that thy blood was shed for me,
And that thou bidst me come to thee,
O Lamb of God, I come !

“ Just as I am, and waiting not
To rid my soul of one dark blot,
To thee whose blood can cleanse each spot,
O Lamb of God, I come !

"Just as I am, for love unknown
Has broken every barrier down;
Now to be thine and thine alone,
O Lamb of God, I come!"

IV. Fourthly, we remark that we are indebted to the same grace for the preservation and increase of the divine life: sanctification also is of grace. It is with the work of the spirit in the soul, just as it is with the works of the divine power in the outer world. The universe of matter possesses in itself no principle of self-support and perpetual growth. On the other hand, the same divine power which at first created it from nothing is momentarily exercised in its maintenance. The laws of nature, as we call them, are nothing but the chosen modes of the Almighty's operation. Were that operation to cease for an instant, "the round globe and all which it inherit" would sink to wreck, or to nonentity. The preservation of the universe, therefore, is nothing less than a continued creation. It requires the constant exercise of the very same power which spoke organized matter into being, to maintain it from falling back again to its original nothing. Precisely in the same way, the sanctification of the believer is nothing less than a continued conversion. As it required the same power which raised Christ from the dead to quicken his soul and inspire it with the breath of spiritual life, so it requires the very same power, in momentary exercise, to preserve that life from extinction and to promote its increase. Without Christ he can do nothing. It is not I that live, said Paul, but Christ that liveth in me. Every grace of the Christian character—so far from being due to any innate or interior principle of life, or to any agency of the man himself—is the direct fruit of the Holy Spirit; and that Holy Spirit is the gift of God. This condition of dependence upon gracious assistances and supplies, is at once the believer's necessity, privilege, security, and happiness. "That he has neither strength nor wisdom in himself is no disadvantage, for he is connected with infinite wisdom and almighty power. If he forgets his true state and thinks himself to be something, he presently finds he is indeed nothing; but if he is content to be nothing and to have nothing, he is sure to find a seasonable and abundant communication of all that he wants. Thus he lives, like Israel in the wilderness, upon mere bounty; but then, it is a bounty unchangeable, unwearied, inexhaustible, and all-sufficient. Moses, when speaking of the methods the Lord took to humble Israel, mentions his feeding them with manna as one method. This is not so easy to be understood. One would think they were rather in danger of being proud when they saw themselves provided for in such an extraordinary way. But the manna would not keep; they could not hoard it up, and were therefore in a state of absolute dependence from day to day. This was well suited to humble

them. Just so in spiritual things. We should be better pleased, perhaps, to be set up with a stock or sufficiency at once; but His way is best. The Lord's glory is most displayed, and our safety is best secured, by keeping us quite poor and empty in ourselves, and supplying us from one minute to another, according to our need. And what are we that the Most High should thus notice us—should visit us every morning, and water us every moment? Oh, it is a most astonishing thought, that the mighty God should thus stoop and accommodate himself to the situation, wants, and capacities of the weakest, meanest, and poorest of his children! Praise to his glorious grace!

V. Lastly, the Christian's admission to heaven is also of grace. By nature he deserved the very opposite of heaven, even the wrath and curse of God forever. Conversion and sanctification, as we have seen, are the gifts of God's grace, and therefore lay not one particle of merit to the account of their subject. Not all his tears of penitence, and exercises of faith, and works of love, invest him with the least claim upon heavenly rewards. They are the gracious products of the holy Spirit, and could never have been performed by his unaided powers; they are stained with imperfections, then, and far from acceptable on their own account in the eyes of a Holy God; and were they original and perfect, even then they would only be the proper duty of the creature, and would possess nothing of absolute merit. It is true, indeed, that the Christian becomes an heir of heaven, and holds a claim upon his place in heaven; but that heirship, that claim, are not his own, but Christ's—Christ's, who has graciously conferred them upon him. It is in that Saviour alone, and on account of his vital union with that Saviour, that he possesses all things; and since that union was consummated by grace, all the privileges to which it introduces him are gracious, too. Yes, my brethren, as it was grace that led our wandering feet into the heavenly way, and grace that defends us from dangers, supports us under troubles, and supplies us in our necessity upon the road, so it is grace that shall open to us the portals of the celestial city, and welcome us to the abode of God. "Blessing and honor and glory and power be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb, for ever and ever. Amen." A ready response this doctrine finds in every pious heart. This it is that shall wake our gratitude and love, through all eternity. Hark! how the echoes roll around the corridors of heaven! "Now unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, be glory, honor, and dominion, for ever and ever. Amen."

THE PRAYER-MEETING.

For the Prayer-Meeting.

Pulpit Prayer Answered.

MANY years ago a very learned minister of England was in the habit of preparing his sermons very carefully, and he used to read them very accurately. He did so for years, but there was never known to be a sinner saved under him—never such a wonder. The poor good man—for he was an earnest man, and wished to do good—was one day at prayer in the pulpit, praying to God that he would make him a useful minister. When he had finished his prayer, he was stone-blind. He had sufficient self-possession to preach the sermon extempore, which he had prepared with notes. People did not notice his blindness, but they never heard the Doctor preach such a sermon as that before. There was deep attention; there were souls saved. He found his way from the pulpit, and began to express his deep sorrow that he had lost his eye-sight, when some good old woman present said, perhaps a little unkindly, but still very truthfully:

"Doctor, we have never heard you preach like this before; and if that is the result of your being blind, it is a pity you were not blind twenty years ago, for you have done more good to-day than you have done in twenty years."

Holy Salutation.

THERE is a beautiful simplicity in all pure religion and pure worship, very far removed from forms and

ceremonies. It is the heart which gives life and character to true devotion. What multitudes in Christian lands, even among the educated and refined, are put to shame by the pious simplicity of Icelanders.

It is said of the Icelanders that they scrupulously observe the usage of reading the sacred Scriptures every morning, the whole family joining in the singing and prayers. When the Icelander awakes, he salutes no person until he has saluted God. He usually hastens to the door, adores there the Author of Nature and Providence, then steps back into the dwelling, saying to his family: "God grant you a good day!" What a beautiful illustration is this of the Christian obligation on the part of households to recognize and worship God!

Frugal of Prayer,

If prayer is the "Christian's vital health," then he might as well try to be frugal of his physical health as to be frugal of prayer; by which he would soon become weak and faint for want of strength for the ordinary duties of life.

No Christians, then, can afford to be frugal of prayer, in the intervals of daily business and amusement. Enjoyment of *all* communion with God must be impaired by the loss of these little tributaries. A Christian's life, so conducted, must languish as a tree does whose fibrous roots are stripped off, leaving only its truncanl roots, possibly

only a tap-root, for its nourishment. That Christian is hoping against impossibilities who thinks to enjoy a life of intercourse with God in any such way.

We are opposing God's method of working if our life has a tendency to incapacitate us for the enjoyment of prayer *at all times*. If by needless excess of worldly cares; if by inordinate desires, which render it impossible for us to accomplish our objects in life *without* such excess of care; if by frivolous habits; if by the reading of infidel or effeminate literature; if by an indolent life; if by any self-indulgence in physical regimen—we render the habit of fragmentary prayer impracticable or unnatural to us, *we are crossing the methods of God's working*. Something has gone wrong in the life of that Christian who finds himself thus estranged from filial freedom with God.

Such a Christian must, sooner or later, be brought back to Christ, and must begin life anew. He will come back heavy laden and in tears. No words express more becomingly the wail of his spirit, whenever he comes to his right mind, than the plaint of Cowper:

"Oh for a closer walk with God!"

Ingratitude to God.

SOME years since an humble but pious and devoted colored minister was preaching to a congregation in one of the cities of New-England, and took occasion to illustrate man's ingratitude to God. He said in quaint language: "Man-kind be just like de hogs. Dey go under de acorn-tree, and dey eat de acorn, but dey neber once look up to see where de acorn comes from." And so it is as a matter of common observation. What multitudes of

families and persons sit down to the well-spread tables of their daily meals without one word of thanks to God for his bounties, or even thought of the giver of all their comforts!

An Incurable Disease.

THE pious John Newton closes a letter to a friend in the following truly instructive language: "You kindly inquire after my health; myself and family are, through the divine favor, perfectly well; yet, healthy as I am, I labor under a growing disorder, for which there is no cure—I mean *old age*. I am not sorry it is a mortal disease, from which no one recovers; for who would live always in such a world as this, who has a scriptural hope of an inheritance in a world of light? I am now in my seventy-second year, and seem to have lived long enough for myself. I have known something of the evils of life, and have had a large share of the good. I know what the world can do, and what it can not do; it can neither give nor take away that peace of God, which passeth all understanding; it can not soothe a wounded conscience, nor enable us to meet death with comfort. That you, my dear sir, may have an abiding and abounding experience that the gospel is a catholicon, adapted to all our wants and all our feelings, and a suitable help when every other help fails, is the sincere and ardent prayer of your affectionate friend."

The Earnest Preacher.

MANY years ago two young men were strolling, on a Lord's day, through the streets of London. One of them, named Henry Barrow, was a barrister of fine talents and good education, but given to

reckless dissipation, and by his jovial humor and rare social gifts enticing others into vice. His companion, named Sutton, gave evidence that he had spent the previous night in debauchery, and had not recovered from its influence. He was in a half-penitent mood, and, suffering keenly from the effects of vice, was prating of reform. Barrow, whose strong constitution was yet unharmed by indulgence, could not resist an inclination to banter his moody comrade. He made sport of his serious words and inward remorse; asked him if he had turned preacher and taken orders; threatened to complain of him to the church authorities, and have him apprehended for heresy; and finally advised him, like Falstaff, to take another bottle of sack, as a potent medicine.

While using his sharp wit, to the great discomfort of the unhappy Sutton, they passed an open church, from which rang out the voice of an earnest preacher. Barrow stopped to listen.

"Let us go in," he said.

"What for?" said Sutton, "to hear a man rant?"

"Yes," was the reply; "this man is worth hearing, for he is evidently in earnest. I don't care for the priests who repeat their lessons parrot-like—but a live man is always worth listening to."

Sutton would not be persuaded, but went in search of more sack, muttering something about "mad freaks," but Barrow kept to his purpose of hearing the earnest preacher. He heard to some purpose, for the minister was a man of fervid zeal, and by the sharpness of his rebukes against sin, and pungent warnings of the judgment to come, startled Barrow's slumbering conscience. The man of pleasure was sobered, and went from

the church to his rooms to think of his ways. The arrow of truth had reached its mark. The profligate was tortured by the agony of shame and remorse. His days were full of gloomy unrest—his nights were sleepless. At length he could not bear the burden alone, but sought for Christian counsel, went often to the house of God, read diligently the Bible he had scorned, and, like the pardoned prodigal, found peace in the blood of atonement. The gay worldling, from that casual attendance on an earnest preacher, became one of the most earnest and useful preachers of his age, an able leader of the Nonconformists, and sealed his testimony by an exultant martyr-death.

Christ the Light of the World.

"I AM the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life."—JOHN 8: 12.

God is light, and Christ is "the image of the invisible God;" God of God, light of light. . . The visible light of the world is the sun, and Christ is the "Sun of Righteousness." One sun enlightens the whole world; so does one Christ, and there needs no more. . . It is the happiness of those who follow Christ, that they "shall not walk in darkness." Follow Christ, and we shall follow him to heaven.—*M. Henry.*

"Lord, be it mine, like thine elect, to choose

The better part; like them to use
The means thy love hath given;
Be holiness my aim on earth,
That death be welcomed as a birth
To life and bliss in heaven!"

Bishop Mant.

Christ and the gospel are light, and there is no darkness at all in them; if you say, that you "know Christ" and his gospel, and yet keep not "Christ's command-

ments," but dearly hug your private darling corruptions, "you are liars, and the truth is not in you;" you have no acquaintance with the God of light, and the gospel of light.—*Cudworth.*

Christ "is the light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world." "In his light shall we see light." Light to see and eschew the ways of sin; light to see and walk in the paths of truth.—*Wagan.*

Let us be an example of godliness. Let us be a light to them that yet abide in darkness. Let not the name of God be evil spoken of through us. His name is holy. "Woe be unto the world," saith Christ, "because of offenses; for it must needs be that offenses come; but woe be unto that man by whom the offense cometh." . . . The light of God shines in the darkness of this world. It is the sweet incense and savor of God. Where-soever the breath thereof is received it bringeth life.—*Bp. Jewel.*

Lord Jesus, thou Light of Truth and Sun of Righteousness, shed thy bright beams upon my heart, that I may know, and knowing, love thee.

A Good Minister of Jesus Christ.

THIS is the title, as it is the text, of a discourse by Rev. Dr. Williams, which is full of devout and profitable thought. We select the two following lessons, important in themselves, and beautifully and impressively stated:

"1. The minister needs, alike adequately to conceive and fully discharge his vast work, not only piety, but eminence in piety. It was the testimony of Shepherd, the devout and most successful pastor, at its first settlement, of Cambridge, in the rising colony of Massachu-

setts Bay, that he had never preached a sermon to others that had not cost him prayers in its preparation, and that he had not first preached to his own soul.

Well does such a spirit become those who are, while ministering the great remedy of souls to others, themselves surrounded with infirmities; and who, unless watchful, prayerful, and devoted, imbibe and diffuse instead of relieving the plague they were intended to stay. But is it most unbefitting to see a consumptive and ghastly steward dispensing the delicacies of a royal banquet which he seems himself unable to partake or relish? Is it a sight to move disgust when the viands of a festive gathering are placed on the board by leprous hands, that distill their pollution on all which they touch? Is it melancholy to see the ragged artisans of Europe toiling in utter destitution to weave fabrics of regal splendor which they, the makers, never may hope to wear, and which form an appalling contrast with their own looped and tattered wretchedness? It is yet more unsuitable, that truth should dwell in the mind of a religious teacher only to be transmitted to others, and not to be transmuted into the nutriment and substance of his own soul: "*Nourished up,*" says the apostle, "in the words of faith and good doctrine whereunto thou hast attained." The doctrine should have fed its dispenser, that it may profit its recipients.

"2. It is a day of change in which we live; and man, in every age, has shown an avidity for the new, the startling, and the strange. But let us remember, that as the stars shining over us are the same that let down their light on Adam, so the great starlight truths in the firmament of Revelation must re-

main the same; and Jesus Christ, the great Truth of all revelation, the one decree of Heaven, and the one hope of Earth, must remain in our theology, as in that of our fathers, unchangeable, the same yesterday, to-day, and forever. Far, in this matter of the soul's salvation, be from us, and from our churches, the spirit of restlessness and self-sufficient innovation, that seeks something vaster than heaven, newer than truth, and better than God."

The Man of Sorrows.

WHOSE sorrows were ever like his? Who was ever so deeply acquainted with grief as he? Those sufferings should seem none the less interesting to us because ages have passed away since the ground was moistened by those great drops, as it were blood, which fell from his face. They are still remembered by him who endured them, and by those ministering spirits which came to strengthen him in his hour of weakness and temptation; and, doubtless, he is now deeply grieved, and feels that he is crucified afresh, when he witnesses the contemptuous rejection of that sacrifice for sin, which was made at so vast an expense, and the obstinate refusal of a guilty world to come to him for the life that he is so willing to give. We should never forget that hour of darkness, when, being sorrowful even unto death, he prayed, if it were possible, the cup might pass from him, but nevertheless devoted himself to death according to the divine will; for in the unutterable woe of Gethsemane each redeemed soul partakes as deeply as if no other soul had ever sinned. One drop of that blood which began to be shed in that mysterious agony, even as whole

fountains, cleanses from all sin, and without it there is no remission.

If those who complain of the coldness and heartlessness of the world, and sigh for a more affectionate remembrance in the hearts of others, and feel that life is a barren wilderness, without sympathy, would but turn their thoughts to this divine sufferer, and consider that Jesus, having loved his own amidst the desolations of earth, loved them to the end, and bore them on his heart as the trophies of his victorious grace, there would be less fruitless longing for that which perishes with the using, fewer withered hopes, and more earnest desires for a deeper union with him who, although all things else change, knows no variableness nor shadow of turning. Those who are nearest and dearest to our hearts are at the best unstable and changeable creatures. They are not always the same. Their relations to us are continually changing. The glory of an unalterable love is reserved for its full manifestations in the heavenly world.

Anecdote of Doctor Nettleton.

A YOUNG man just completing his professional studies was induced to accompany some female friends to the pastor's study. He there gave a promise that before he retired that night, he would, on his knees, offer prayer for himself. Possessing strict integrity, when he went to his room he thought of his promise; he was embarrassed—he walked the room, in a cold winter's night, till late, before his proud heart would yield; and when he fell on his knees, such was the struggle in his mind, he said, "He would not, if he could be President of the United States, that any should know he was on his knees

in prayer." There he was awakened, and after more than a week's struggle, he was made willing in the day of God's power. He became not only distinguished as a physician, but as a Christian and an officer in the church.

For the Prayer-Meeting.

THE TEMPTER.—As in the robbing of a house it is the custom of the sturdiest thieves to put in a little boy at a window, who being once within the house, may easily open the doors and let them in too, so the tempter, in the rifling of the soul, despairs for the most part to attempt his entrance by some gross sin of a dismal, frightful hue, and appearance, and therefore he employs a lesser, that he may creep and slide into it insensibly; which yet, as little as it is, will so open and unlock the bars of conscience, that the biggest and the most enormous abominations shall at length make their entrance, and seize and take possession of it.

The Sympathies of Angels.

THE sympathies, desires, hopes, and anxieties of angels respect man as a sinner—a child of guilt and yet of hope—lost and yet within reach of salvation—under the power of death and yet immortal—on trial for life eternal—running a race for heaven or for hell! What men call the great events of time are trifles in their sight: what men call mean, small, of no moment, they count grand, vast, chief, every thing. As they wing their flight over this once fair but now blighted world, and survey its varied scenes—the din of its business, the glitter of its wealth, the pride of its greatness, the temples of its learning, the

tread of its armies and the war of its navies, the tumult of the nations, and the crash of falling kingdoms—these are not the events which arrest their attention and excite their interest, but they do mark the falling tear of the penitent, and listen to the sigh of the contrite; they pause over the dwelling of prayer, and mingle in the circle of devotion; they watch the sinner in all his goings, and register the number of the saved, and bear to heaven the joyful news when a soul is converted.

The soul of man is of infinite value, or the angels of God would not take such an interest in its welfare. Its guilty and ruined state while perishing in sin is inexpressibly awful, or its recovery to God and life would not thus thrill the heavenly world with joy. Oh, how would angels plead and toil and strive to save men, if they were but permitted such an access to and influence over them as Christians possess! And can Christians be stupefied or neglectful, when angels are thus awake and would do so much to pull men out of the fire of perdition? Can human or angelic efforts be better expended than in behalf of man's salvation? What are the grand achievements of art, science, or arms—what the noblest enterprises of commerce or ambition, compared to the bringing of a single sinner to Christ? "Let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way, shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins." Christian reader, take home this thought to your heart. Ponder it well. No other end is worth living for. Live for this. Let those sublime motives which ruled the mission and life of Jesus Christ rule your heart and life.